In Search of a Good Project Schedule

What we will be talking about

- Why you have a schedule
- What makes a schedule good
- How you can determine if you have a good schedule

Some reasons you have a project schedule

- ❑ “Because I have to.”
- ❑ “Management requires a schedule before I can start working on my project.”
- ❑ “I need to show a schedule that accounts for everything.”
- ❑ “I have to prove I can get this done by the deadline.”

Some better reasons you have a schedule

- "I need to see how all this work fits together."
- "I need to know where I am in relation to where I thought I would be right now."
- "There is an unexpected change in my schedule and I want to know the impact on the rest of my schedule."

"A wise man's question contains half the answer."

Solomon Gabriel

What is a schedule – as a basic tool

- Helps to manage information about project activities
- At it's most basic level, a schedule can help:

❑ Capture what you plan to do

❑ Show a timeline

❑ Track progress

Schedules can be more advanced

- Map out the work that needs to be done to forecast completion
- Track progress to specifically measure where you are against where you expected to be
- Re-forecast as changes occur to see the impact of date changes

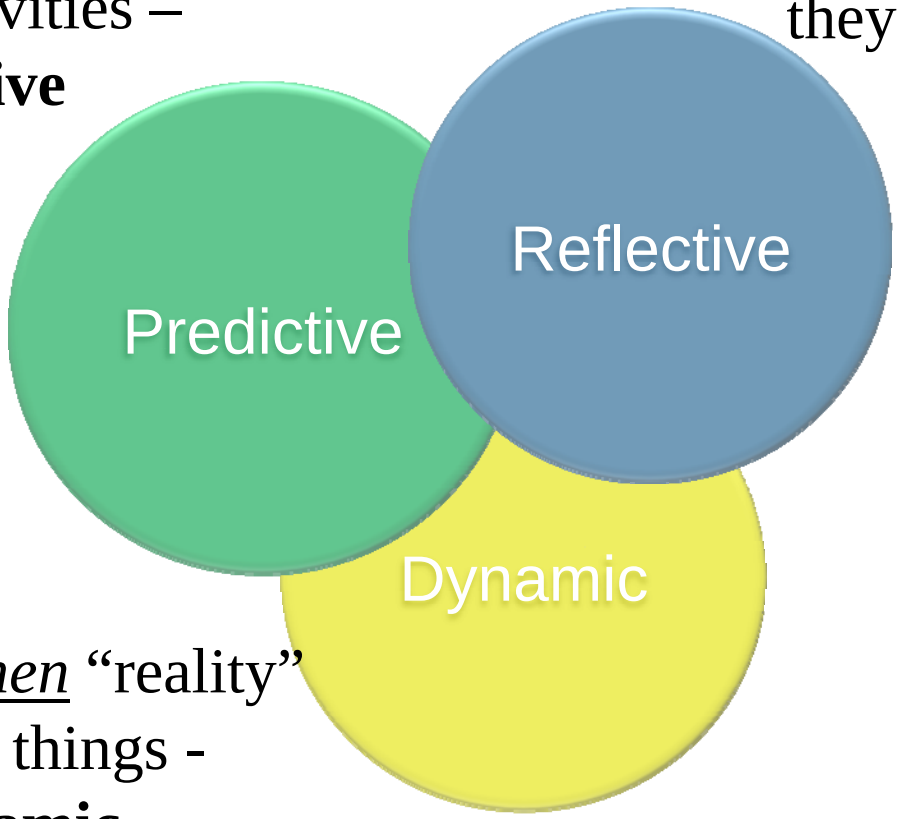
"There are many ways of going forward, but only one way of standing still."

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Characteristics of a good schedule

Show relationships between activities – **Predictive**

Show where the team stands against the work they are *actually* doing – **Reflective**



"Adjust" *<u>when</u>* "reality" changes things - **Dynamic**

How can you tell if a schedule is good

Look schedule construction and data characteristics:

- ❑ Construction (predictive)
- ❑ Progress Reporting (reflective)
- ❑ “Moving Parts” (dynamic)

From a construction standpoint

- A good schedule:
  - Is constructed in a way that allows it to be predictive - *"Show relationships between activities"*
  - Is constructed to be dynamic with "moving parts" that change as updates are made - *"Adjust" <u>when</u> 'reality' changes things"*

From a status standpoint

- A good schedule:
  - Reflects the current status of progress – *“Show where the team stands against the work they are actually doing.”*

"The best way to escape from a problem is to solve it."

Albert Einstein.

How can I spot “predictive” characteristics?

- Examine predecessors/successors
  - All, or nearly all, tasks have Predecessor and Successor relationships
  - No summary tasks have a Predecessor or Successor relationship

How can I spot “predictive” characteristics?

- Look at constraint dates
  - Minimal use of constrained dates
    - If constraints are used, use soft constraints; “should start/finish on…”
    - Few, if any, hard constraints; e.g., “must start on” or “Must finish on”

How can I spot “reflective” characteristics?

- Schedule includes the “expected” work streams for the type of project being done.
- Examine the critical path
  - Is there a critical path?
  - Are there interim milestones to check progress?

How can I spot “reflective” characteristics?

- Review task durations
  - Task durations fall within 1%-10% of total duration
  - Limited tasks with odd/fractional durations

How can I spot “reflective” characteristics?

- Review task durations (cont.)
  - Limited tasks with “estimated” durations
  - Duration and work are independent
    - e.g., not every one week task = 40 hours of work

How can I spot “dynamic” characteristics?

- Baseline
  - Actually exists
  - Isn’t out of date
- Status date
  - Has actually been changed

How can I spot “dynamic” characteristics?

- No tasks with [forecasted] “start” in the past
  - e.g., No tasks with “start” date in the past with % Complete = 0

How can I spot “dynamic” characteristics?

- No tasks with [forecasted] “finish” in the past
  - e.g., No tasks with “finish” date in the past with % Complete less than 100%

Why is this important?

- Why have a schedule?
  - Map out the work that needs to be done to forecast completion - *Predictive*
  - Measure where you are against where you expected to be - *Reflective*
  - Assess impacts as dates change - *Dynamic*

“A good schedule doesn’t tell you what you want to hear, it tells you what you need to know.”

QUESTIONS?

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